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THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2013

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INPORTNEWS

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VALE CENTRE

Testing the ice

VICTORIA GRAY
inPortNEWS Staff

PORT COLBORNE — It's hard, it's fast and it's ready to go — the ice that is. Members of the Port Colborne Pirates Junior B and Southern Tier Admirals minor atom AAA teams were among the lucky few to test the ice in the Tedder Kennedy rinks at Vale Health and Wellness Centre in Port Colborne last week. Pirates head coach Brian Kelley said it was the first time his team hit the ice — and it and its ice are both awesome.



VICTORIA GRAY Staff Photo

Southern Tier Admirals minor atom AAA team members Jacob Leblanc, left, Harrison Langerak and Andrew Leblanc help test out the ice at Vale Health and Wellness Centre. They say the ice is hard, fast and bright.

see VALE | page 2

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upfront

■ VALE

Arena has 'wow' factor

FROM PAGE 1

"It's got that wow factor to it," he said. "What a difference going from the Westside Arena to this. I know the team and city are very proud to have this."

When Mayor Vance Badway and councillors tested the ice a few weeks ago they said it was brittle.

On Jan. 14 councillors voted in favor of having young players test the ice to make sure it's ship-shape for the community celebration on Saturday, Feb. 16.

Staff at the centre have been tweaking the air temperature, rink temperature and humidity to create thick, dense hard ice that will stand up to the beating hockey players and figure skaters lay down.

Community services manager Harry Hakim said every facility needs a different mix of temperatures.

"Staff need to learn how to work and deal with a much larger facility, so the more people we can get out here the more prepared they will be when 1,000 people come to watch a game," he said.

Testing Wednesday started with small children then moved to Jr. B's.

Admirals coach Kevin Langerak led the team's first practice at its new home rink and thought the ice was great.

■ MUNICIPAL FINANCE: Naming rights still up for bids at wellness centre

Vale centre funding short \$1.9 million



DAVE JOHNSON Staff Photo

The Vale Health and Wellness Centre.

MARYANNE FIRTH
InPortNEWS Staff

PORT COLBORNE — City staff need to hit the ground running in search of \$1.9 million still needed to finance Vale Health and Wellness Centre.

With the opening of the centre only weeks away, council discussed Monday, Jan. 28 the funding still needed to ease the burden of the build does not fall on taxpayers.

The discussion began following a staff report brought forward to outline the city's debentures for the coming year for various capital projects, including the Vale centre, approved in the 2012 budget.

In total, Port Colborne will debenture \$5.694 million, city councillors agreed Monday,

with roughly \$2.1 million of that amount falling on the tax levy — that figure does not include the Vale centre, but does cover such things as fire department vehicles and a portion of the Lock 8 skate park.

The remaining funds will be "self-financed" through other sources of revenues, such as donations and sponsorship opportunities provided by various contributors, said Mayor Vance Badway.

During last year's budget deliberations, council approved to bridge finance the funds required from sponsorship and donations toward the cost of the centre. The city must raise \$3.5 million to cover the cost of the debt. Currently, \$1.6 million has been raised.

Ward 1 Coun. Dave Elliott emphasized that as the city

currently sits, that additional \$1.9 million for the Vale centre is unfunded.

The \$1.6 million in funds collected thus far includes \$1.2 million from Vale for the naming rights to the facility.

"That makes me worried," Elliott said, noting that only about \$400,000 has been raised aside from the naming rights thus far.

He said his fingers are crossed hoping the fundraising efforts are a success.

If not another penny is raised, that cost will eventually fall on taxpayers, said Peter Senese, the city's director of community and corporate services. Staff, however, are working hard to see those funds raised through sponsorship opportunities and other fundraising initiatives, he added.

The naming rights to both

\$5.694M
Total debentures (\$1.2 million of it on tax levy)

\$500,000
Road works over 20 years

\$232,000
Removal/replacement of city fuel tanks over 30 years

\$800,000
City operations Centre Phase 1 design over 30 years

\$300,500
New fire vehicle over 20 years

\$861,600
New skateboard/BMX park over 30 years

\$3M
Vale Health and Wellness Centre over 10 years

ice pads, the aquatics centre and gymnasium are still up for grabs, Senese said, as well as the soccer and baseball fields and the bocce courts.

In addition, the city is continuing to sell seats and bricks for the centre, as well as accepting cash donations for its donor wall.

"We are knocking on doors," Senese said, hoping to encourage corporations, businesses and individuals to invest.

"It's no question it's a task," Badway said about raising the additional funds, but noting the city is only "\$1.9 million away" from raising the centre's total \$32-million price tag.

Funds raised thus far will cover the city's single debt payment of \$63,000 for 2013,

THE VOTE

Voting on 2013 debenture financing for the city's capital projects:

In favour: Ward 1 Coun. Bill Steele, Ward 2 Coun. Angie Desmarais, Ward 3 Couns. Frank Danch and Bea Kenney, and Ward 4 Couns. Ron Bodner and Barbara Butters.

Opposed: Ward 1 Coun.

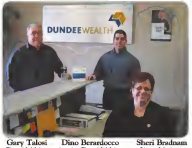
Dave Elliott
Absent: Ward 2 Coun. Yvon Doucet

and two payments equalling \$126,000 for 2014.

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THEATRE: Behind the scenes at the Operatic Society

Backstage Pass

ALLISON SMITH
For InPortNEWS

PORT COLBORNE — A dedicated group of people who work together at a labour of love.

That's how the individuals who make up the committed backstage crew of Port Colborne Operatic Society would describe one another.

They are the backbone of a growing community theatre group that has put hundreds of hours into constructing and painting sets and props before the curtain rises on the society's annual productions.

"In a lot of ways, this has to be a labour of love because a lot of hours go into this," says publicity manager Jeff Ballin, adding that arts are "a vital part of the community."

Culture leaves a legacy long after the people who build it are gone, he said.

"The lasting part of your community is your culture."

On a recent Thursday evening, nine crew members work busily, constructing the set for the group's upcoming musical production of *Oliver!*

The night-time quiet of the theatre is shattered as crew members move a backdrop into place and shout instructions to one another from every corner of the stage. In the middle of it all is set designer and scenic artist Jim Crawford, who sits in front of a table where a miniature concept of the set for *Oliver!* is displayed, ensuring each tiny figurine, prop and building is in its place.

This miniature set is an exact replica of the larger backdrop that sets the scene for the play. It allows Crawford to co-ordinate with other members of the production team to ensure

the concept becomes reality on stage.

Crawford puts months into painstakingly constructing each piece. Shortly after closing night of the society's annual productions, he starts building the set concept for next year.

"If you enjoy it, it's not a job," he explains, adding he's been at it for decades. "And my wife (stage manager Jackie Crawford), that's my rock."

She is one of many who assist behind the scenes.

"We have a good group," he says.

Before the large backdrop is finally set up at Lakeshore High, it's built at Bethel Harmony Hall, a former church facility, and transported to the school in sections.

Phil and Anne Converset are two more veterans of the society whose hours of work leave their mark.

Like a few of the crew's members, Phil performs double duty as a cast member and will star in *Oliver!* as antagonist Fagin. Acting is his first love, he says.

Serving on both cast and crew "brings back old memories of different people who have volunteered with the society over the years," he says.

He started as a teenage usher in 1962. His wife, Anne Converset, has been involved with the group since 1967 and is now dramatic director.

"It's been a lot of fun for a lot of years," he says. "We've (him and Anne) done this together for a long time and met a lot of neat people."

There are memories of people and productions that will never go away and some friendships that have lasted 50 years.

"We enjoy it. I think that's



ALLISON SMITH InPort Photos
Top: Crew members work on stage around the set for Port Colborne Operatic Society's production of *Oliver!*, which is set to open in February.
RIGHT: Set designer and scenic artist Jim Crawford moves props in a miniature model of the set.

the important thing, is (that) you have to enjoy it."

As much as possible, props are exchanged with other theatre groups and schools, and even gathered from garage sales and other productions.

They are repurposed, reused and recycled as much as possible to keep overhead costs down so the society can contribute donations to organizations such as Port Colborne Festival of the Arts and Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children.

Props mistress and society board member Pat Ballin (mother of Jeff Ballin) is a tireless hunter, scavenging summer garage sales and other such goldmines for pieces that bring performances to life.

"It's just sort of the finishing touch," she says with a smile. "The director tells me what she wants and I go look for it."

She says her work is "rewarding because you enjoy what you're doing. Everybody works together."

Excitement ramps up as



opening night draws near. Everyone participates in double dress rehearsals before the show to ensure that night's production runs smoothly.

It's important for a community theatre to support interaction between actors and their audience during performances, says Jeff.

That's why there's a catwalk that juts out from the main stage and brings the actors face to face with audience members in the front row.

The asides are well enough for the actors to run up and down at the start of the show to pump up the audience.

"That's where the lifelood

of these shows is, is the audience," says Jeff, adding the society enjoys enthusiastic support from the community and hopes to fill the 600-seat theatre for each performance.

Many ticket sales come through word of mouth and Ballin uses the group's Facebook page and Twitter profile to promote sales and give audiences a look backstage.

The society has enjoyed much support in its 68 years — including donations that allow the team to purchase new equipment, and businesses that sponsor performances.

Tickets are sometimes

donated to local charities. Community involvement and teaching youth about local theatre are top priorities.

The society funds scholarships at Port High and Lakeshore High. Some current volunteers speak to high school students about opportunities at the theatre.

The society is always looking for dedicated new volunteers to work as ushers, in sound and lighting or on the backstage crew. People of any age are always welcome.

Anyone interested in more information about the society can contact the group at 905-834-9877.

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ourview

Mali gift on the money

Giving \$22 million to the Mali mission is a small price to pay to contain the Islamist menace.

Like most Canadians, we're wary about getting involved in conflicts we don't belong in.

But when you look at what's going on in the landlocked west African country, it's clear our contribution to the international efforts is just about right.

Before we put money in the international \$450-million pot and before France intervened on the ground in mid-January, the conflict was different.

What began a year ago was about the Tuareg people trying to annex northern Mali. They're Muslims, but they want their own homeland. That's why governments have defence forces—to deal with internal flare-ups, not to invade Canada's business.

But when al-Qaida-inspired Ansar Dine offered a hand, things got ugly. They partnered with the Tuaregs but had different goals. They want to impose Sharia law. They're banning music and alcohol, destroying historic shrines, imposing draconian corporal punishment and more.

Despite being mostly Muslim, regular Muslims don't want this. Now the Islamists and the Tuaregs have split. The Tuaregs are mostly back with the government. They realize doing business with Ansar Dine was like keeping Pandora's box.

That's where the rest of the world gets involved.

Now when it comes to everyday living, African countries need to become more self-sustaining.

Canada already contributes a whopping \$110 million in yearly aid to Mali, although we're close to expiring last year when the situation grows stable.

Their minds are of the Arab Spring. What everyone thought was a people's uprising ended in radical Islam reaching for power.

The big question in Canada now is whether we'll commit more money than money and the transporters need to see far west. The \$22 million combines relief money with National Defence's contributions.

As I stand, we don't need to join the thousands of French troops on the ground. Besides, current efforts are making headway.

But as for the cash? In a world where warfare is becoming global so quickly, Islamism is gaining ground in an unstable region is a concern for us all.

■ I'VE BEEN THINKING

Thoughts about transformation

FR. DAVID GRAHAM SCOTT

St Paul urges us not to be conformed to this age and this world, but to be transformed by the renewal or rebirthing of our mind and heart, so that we may try out and find out just how good, acceptable and perfect the will of God is (compare Romans 12:2).

Our age is seen by many to be post-Christian. For it is materialist in the Marxist sense of materialism, ruling out God as an oppressive lie. It is materialist in the Freudian sense of materialism, regarding God as a childish delusion.

But there is another materialism that comes from the good news that God created all things very good, and from the good tidings of great joy for all sinners that the immortal and eternal Word of God became material flesh—a human born of the Virgin Mary. Christianity is the most materialistic religion in the world.

Neither the Marxism of Soviet Russia nor the Marxism that inspires the elites and unionists of the West can satisfy the human thirst for peace and joy and our hunger for meaning and life after death. Nor can Freud and his successors plumb the depths of human need, much less help us to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Readers' views

Rolling the dice on costs

Here it comes and if anybody thinks it's a one-time need for cash to run our new top sports edifice you are sadly mistaken. It appears we have a \$1.9-million shortfall to finance Vale High-School Wellness Center.

We have one councillor with his fingers crossed while the mayor plans to launch a blitz for more corporate sponsorship, donations, etc. They seem like good plans except maybe a tad late and 9.9 million dollars short. As I have said in past letters on this subject "don't spend money you haven't got."

Fixed-income residents have faced steadily rising home owners taxes for years and there is a breaking point where the increases will affect their quality of life. I do not want to turn this into diatribe on "told you so" or attempts to roll the clock back on the spending side because we cannot save money on incurred expenses. I could seriously question the skateboard park but what would be the point? The extra expenses in police protection against the bullies and paramedics visits there

We are sinners; we have come short of the glory of God. Some of us have even broken the commandments of God not to murder, steal or commit adultery. We all need renewal, we need rebirthing, we need a new start. We need to turn from self to God and others.

God is on our side. God loves us and gave us a new start, a new Adam, a new human, when he sent his only begotten Son to be born, to die and rise again. When we turn to God in faith and are baptized into Jesus Christ, we are baptized into his death and resurrection, so that we have a new start. And this happens because the Holy Spirit joins us to Christ, gives us his new mind and heart, and enables us to start following his way of life.

This is not magic. We will struggle and pray as Christ did (Hebrews 5:7). We need to turn to God every day and be converted every day. We need to be like toddlers who fall down but get up again, fall and get up again, fall and get up again—in all this we are not alone. Christ is with us. And his Church feeds us.

We might wonder if we will ever become like Christ. But for most of us the transformation of heart and mind takes time, often a lifetime. We yield to temptation or despair. That is why

will knock our socks off. Not to mention the noise factor for the local residents.

I also hope the revenue side will be adequate to maintain services but I have my doubts on that, so it appears this wellness centre will become a sickly albatross on the backs of senior citizens in our community for years to come. Oh well! Here's my plan—to roll the dice and see what happens.

John C Duquette
Port Colborne

Good reasons to quit smoking

While doing some research on my computer I came across an interesting article about the effects of quitting smoking by Dennis Thompson Jr. and reviewed by Cynthia Holmes MD.

The medical experts found one of the health improves within minutes of the last puff and continues in the years that follow. If one quits before turning 51 they cut their chances of dying within the next 15 years in half as compared with people who don't quit. Twenty

daily repentance and conversion are so necessary.

But in the material world of the body, think how long it has taken Trevor Greene to start walking. This former athlete and soldier was in Afghanistan, meeting with village elders on March 4, 2006. A Taliban youth buried his home-made axe into Greene's unhelmeted head. At first doctors thought he would spend the rest of his life in a wheelchair. Then they thought he would never walk and he wrote a book. And now six years later he is taking his first steps, using a walker with assistance on either side and behind him. He has his bad days, but he has not given up. Neither should we give up.

And we would do well to pray the prayer of St. Richard of Chichester (1197-1203): "Thanks be to thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, for all the benefits which thou hast given me; for all the pains and insults which thou hast borne for me. O most merciful Redeemer, Friend and Brother, may I know thee more clearly, love thee more dearly, and follow thee more nearly." Indeed we could sing the Godspell version that ends with "day by day."

Fr. David Graham Scott ministers at St. Ignace of Antioch Orthodox Church

minutes after you quit smoking your blood pressure goes down and your pulse rate slows. Eight hours after you quit smoking your blood starts to recover and within 24 hours your chance of a heart attack has decreased. A few weeks after you quit your circulation has improved and your lungs have begun to function better.

One year, the risk of suffering coronary heart disease has decreased to half the risk of a smoker. Five years, your risk of having a stroke has decreased and will continue to decrease. Ten years, your risk of lung cancer is now half that of those who keep smoking. After 15 years, the risk of heart disease is now comparable to that of people who never smoked and your risk of dying is nearly back to the same level of non-smokers.

When one quits smoking your bad breath is gone, the stains on your teeth and fingers have gone and the smell leaves your hair, clothes, car, and furniture. With all of these health benefits why are you still smoking?

Don Smith
Fonthill

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It ain't over 'til it's over

BERND FRANK
 INPORTNEWS Staff

WELLAND — History repeated itself Sunday when the Welland Junior Canadians renewed their 58 rivalry with the Port Colborne Pirates at least for the most part. While a road team rebounding from a 3-0 deficit to win in regulation followed the script from a game between the same two junior B hockey teams last October, this time it was the Pirates who prevailed in a 5-4 victory.

Bryan Komarsara, who led Port Colborne in scoring with his second hat trick in as many games, said the team never lost hope, even after Welland netted three goals on the first six shots of the game and chased Pirates starting goaltender Real Cormier to the bench.

"Why, we've been there before and came back. Besides, we owed them one," he said in recalling his team's 4-3 loss to the Junior Canadians after squandering a 3-0 lead.

Komarsara, who also had three goals Friday night in the Pirates' 5-2 victory over the Fort Erie Meteors lost to the Junior Canadians, said adversity doesn't cause the team

to lose focus of the game plan.

"We're a good team and good teams know they can come back against anyone," he said after the Don Cherry's Port Colborne Pirates skated to their seventh straight win and 11th in their last 12 games.

A comeback by the furthest thing from the mind of most in the announced crowd of 569 at Sunday's matinee at Welland Arena. Matthew Mateljan, on the hosts' first shot of the game; Robert Lepine, on the power play; and Brooker Muir, with Welland a man down; staked the Junior Canadians to a lead that seemed insurmountable at the time.

However, that all changed after Morgan Hudson replaced between the Port Colborne pipes and the teams changed sides to start the second period. Suddenly, the Pirates had the momentum and, after two goals from Komarsara and a power-play marker from Jordan Warren, fans favouring the home team had reason to be concerned.

Riley Brooks put Welland up 4-3 early in the final frame, but that

would be the last lead the Junior Canadians would have. Komarsara and Pat Murphy scored unanswered goals to complete Port Colborne's comeback.

Hudson stopped 29 of 30 shots for the win, while Matt Coulombe made 25 saves in the Welland net.

In addition to evening this season's Battle of Hwy. 58 at three wins apiece, Sunday's win increased Port Colborne's lead over the Junior Canadians in the Golden Horseshoe Conference to five points.

PIRATES 5 METEORS 2

Dima Lavrenov scored a hat trick and Bryan Komarsara netted two goals to help Port Colborne wrap up the season series against Fort Erie five wins to two.

Port Colborne scored three unanswered goals in the third period of Friday night's game at Westside Arena.

Morgan Hudson made 23 saves to earn the victory for the Pirates who won their sixth in a row and 10th in their last 11.

Braeden Kavaravitz and Nik Passero scored power-play goals for the Meteors.



JOE CSEH Tribune Photo
 Port Colborne Pirates goaltender Morgan Hudson makes a stick save on Welland Junior Canadians forward Robert Lepine in Sunday afternoon junior B hockey at Welland Arena. At right is Pirates defenceman Michael Sharp.

Natural Alternatives for Heart Health

Dr. Linus Pauling, two-time Noble Prize winner, showed that large amounts of vitamin C and lysine are needed to prevent coronary attacks. 25 years ago Pauling reported that animals make vitamin C and humans do not. That's why sailors died of scurvy during long sea voyages, but the ship's cat survived.



his patients on high doses of vitamin C and lysine. One year later, the scans showed atherosclerosis had regressed in retinal arteries. This also occurs in coronary arteries.

14 years ago, following my own coronary attack, I refused to take cholesterol-lowering drugs. Instead, I decided to take high doses of vitamin C plus lysine. But to take large doses of vitamin C and lysine requires swallowing many pills daily. It's a tall order for those who dislike swallowing one pill. For several years I've been trying to find a company that would manufacture a combination of vitamin C and lysine. Now Medici-Plus is available Rosemary's Natural Choices.

Dr. W. Gifford-Jones

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Information is provided for reference only. For specific health issues consult your local natural health practitioner.



JOE CSEH Tribune Photo
 Port Colborne Pirates forward Dima Lavrenov tried to score on Stoney Creek Warriors goaltender Richard Blake on a penalty shot in Sunday afternoon junior B hockey action at Westside Arena in Port Colborne.

■ **FUNDING:** \$22,650 in grants awarded in Port Colborne

Hydro gives community groups a hefty charge

MARYANNE FIRTH
InPortNEWS Staff

PORT COLBORNE — More than a dozen local community groups walked away from Port Colborne city council chambers with money in their pockets last week.

Port Colborne Hydro Inc. issued \$22,650 in permissive grants during the recent council meeting.

The cheques were presented to group representatives by Hydro board chair Len Hunt, board member Gary Bruno, Port Colborne Mayor Vance Badawey and Ward 3 Coun. Bea

Kenny.

Badawey expressed his gratitude to the groups and all they do for the lakeside city.

"This small contribution is our way of saying thank you," he said. "We know how hard you work. You truly do make a difference in the community."

Though Canadian Niagara Power purchased the utility in 2012, some revenue remains to fund the grants.

In 2014, Port Colborne Fibre Inc., also owned by the city, is expected to become the granting agency using dividends from Niagara Region Broadband Network.



WHO GOT WHAT

- \$1,000:** 79 Lynton Davies Squadron Royal Canadian Air Cadets for band programs, power flying activities and upgrades to the cadet hall.
- \$2,200:** Community Living Port Colborne-Wainfleet for Kids Zone after school program.
- \$2,650:** Niagara 1812 Sugarloaf Settlement for ongoing program in recognition of the bicentennial Commemoration of the War of 1812 in the Sugarloaf Settlement.
- \$1,000:** Niagara Antique Power Association to purchase an ice-cream dipping cabinet as a source of revenue.
- \$900:** Parish of St. James and St. Brendan — The Hub/Out of the Cold program to purchase youth nights and cafe equipment, and replacement of kitchen equipment for Out of the Cold.
- \$3,500:** Port Cares for the Reaching Out and Changing Lives capital campaign.
- \$1,000:** Port Colborne and District Conservation Club for the children's fishing derby.
- \$2,500:** Port Colborne Concert Band to sponsor six summer community concerts.
- \$500:** Port Colborne Feline Initiative for veterinary costs of spay/neuter surgeries for cats in the trap-neuter-vaccinate-return program for feral, unowned cats.
- \$1,000:** Port Colborne Festival of the Arts to assist with the cost of adjudicators for upcoming competitions.
- \$3,000:** Port Colborne Minor Baseball Association to purchase a pitching machine at Westside Ball Fields.
- \$1,100:** Port Colborne Operatic Society Inc. to assist with bringing live musicians to the orchestra.
- \$500:** Royal Canadian Legion Branch 56 for upgrades to its Clarence St. building.
- \$500:** The Hope Centre to assist with purchase of USB sticks for adult learners in the Life Skills and E-Learn programs.
- \$1,250:** Women's Place of South Niagara for programs and services to assist women and children who have been victims of abuse.



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■ **PLANNING:** Elliott hopes to curb complaints

Bump-outs bounced back to BIA

MARYANNE FIRTH
InPortNEWS Staff

PORT COLBORNE — The proposed 'bump-outs' for downtown haven't been bumped — but they have been temporarily sidelined.

Ward 4 Coun. Barb Butters was successful in bringing forward a motion for reconsideration on Jan. 28 regarding the planned curb extensions — often referred to as 'bump-outs' — at two intersections in Port Colborne's downtown.

Though council endorsed the detailed design of the Downtown Central Business District Community Improvement Plan in December, Butters hoped a few details could again be put under the microscope.

Concerns were raised by residents regarding the bump-outs proposed for the intersections of Clarence and King Sts., as well as Clarence and West Sts., as



Butters

she told her fellow councillors.

There's some confusion in the community, Butters said, as to whether the curb extensions will be rolling curbs that grow gradually or six-inch standard curbs.

"I'd like to provide that clarity so we can move forwards without error."

Ward 1 Coun. Dave



You'll never find 100% acceptance."

Dave Elliott, Ward 1 councillor

Elliott was opposed to the reconsideration. The downtown business improvement association board worked hard to help craft the design, he said, and he

felt taking another look at the design would be like saying "we want to change what you worked so hard to do."

He was concerned looking at the design again would open up the floor for people to raise other complaints.

"You'll never find 100% acceptance," he said.

The design was passed with consensus, he added, and would remain as is.

Butters stressed it was only the bump-outs at

the two intersections that she wanted reviewed.

The issue was referred back to the downtown BIA and is expected to come forward to council with a recommendation at a later date.

maryanne.firth@sunmedia.ca

Twitter: @mfirth1Tribune

SEEDING WANNABE BALDIES

PORT COLBORNE — Heads will go hairless March 31 when the Nanooks's Dream Team shave-off is held to raise funds for cancer research in honour of Port Colborne's Jason Bekker-Thompson, a five-year-old diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukaemia in November.

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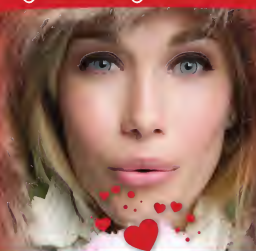
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■ HOUSING: Rosemount Estates

Developer gets good sign from city councillors

MARYANNE FERTH
InPortNEWS Staff

PORT COLBORNE — Despite being cautioned by city staff, Port Colborne city council has approved a draft subdivision plan for Rosemount Estates.

The proposed development contains more than 960 housing units and is to be located on the south side of Kilbilly St. W., north of the former Canadian National Railway lands and west of Steele St.

Project representatives appeared before council Jan. 28 night requesting the draft subdivision plan and necessary zoning bylaw amendment be approved.

While city staff have "worked tirelessly with the developer and review agencies," Dan Aquilina said they are not yet comfortable making a recommendation to approve the plan.

Port Colborne's director of planning and development said there are several outstanding issues raised by reviewing agencies that have yet to be resolved.

Aquilina requested that staff be given more time to work with the developer to see conditions met prior to approval.

"Council could approve (the draft plan) but should be cognizant of the risks," he said.

"I'd caution council to be careful what you do this evening."

Private planner Stephen Fagyas, who spoke on behalf of the developer, wanted to see approvals in place Monday night to offer the proponent assurance of council's support on the project.

A hold would be placed on the property ensuring all conditions are met prior to the subdivision moving forward, he added.

The first phase of the subdivision is set to include 14 single-detached family homes, 43 townhouses and one commercial block.

"Phase 1 is not significant and should be dealt with expeditiously," Fagyas said.

"My client wants to be a team player," he said, adding he has agreed to several city requests including the extension of Rosemount Ave., inclusion of bike lanes and the installation of traffic lights at the intersection of Elgin and Steele Sts.

The Rosemount extension will not move forward until Phase 2, while the traffic lights will be installed in Phase 1.

There are several studies conducted by the developer that require revision, Aquilina said, adding the proponent's consultants and the city's consultants had differing opinions in a few areas including traffic impact and site servicing.

There are also three threatened species

identified by Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority that inhabit the property — the milk snake and bird species the Eastern meadowlark and bobolink.

The conservation authority would like to conduct further study regarding relocation of the species, Aquilina said.

"The NPCA is comfortable with draft plan approval until this issue is resolved," he said.

"This is an urban environment," Fagyas said in response, calling the land unsuitable for snake or migratory bird habitats. There's urbanization to the north, east and south of the subject site, he added.

Fagyas believes it is sometimes forgotten that the land in question "is not a pristine greenfield site," but instead former industrial lands. Lands to the west of the property, deemed environmentally significant, will be left untouched, he added.

"It's time for a decision," Fagyas said, urging council to "not lose sight of the economic benefits of this property."

"I want to see this get off the ground. I want to see development in Port Colborne," said Ward 1 Coun. Bill Steele.

"I like many people, don't like red tape," he said, adding if council can cut that tape for a potential developer, he'd like to see it done.

"Wouldn't you want to see the revisions first before you put your stamp of approval on the development?" Aquilina questioned, adding that providing approval prior to may "put at risk the residents of the municipality."

The conditions of draft approval included in the report are those crafted by Aquilina, as the NPCA among other agencies have yet to put conditions in place.

Aquilina said he tried to cover all grounds to ensure everything was included, but council runs the risk that something may have been missed.

"There's a reason why we call it a draft plan," Mayor Vance Badway said, stressing the development does not move forward if conditions are not met.

"The proponent is looking for a vote of confidence from council," he said, adding assurance of subdivision approval is wanted prior to investing more money into the necessary studies.

"I don't see any liability here or exposure liability to the municipality. The liability is on the proponent," Badway said. "I 100% support this. This is what this municipality needs."

Now that the draft plan has been approved, the "clock starts ticking," Aquilina said, and three years are given for conditions to be completed.



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PORT COLBORNE — Accessibility won't be a problem at the Vale Health and Wellness Centre.

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two spaces originally planned for the property at the former Teeder Kennedy Youth Arena, which has since been demolished.

The Port Colborne Bocce Club, a tenant of the new facility, requested that additional accessible stalls be put in place.

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■ **MARY CHIASSON:** Port Colborne pool supervisor retires

'Hard to say goodbye'

ALLAN BENNER
InPortNews Staff

PORT COLBORNE — Mary Chiasson grew up swimming in the Cross St. pool in downtown Welland until it closed decades ago, and then kept right on swimming in the canal.

She remembers swimming out to passing ships, pushing off from their hulls and swimming back to the canal bank.

Chiasson always loved the water. As a child, she lived along the Welland River and now, at 61, lives in a waterfront home in Wainfleet.

She spent most of the years in between teaching others to love the water as much as she did. She was 26 when she visited Centennial Pool for a swim in September 1978. Though she was just looking forward to enjoying the water, the pool supervisor offered her a job.

Chiasson didn't look back. "It's been fantastic, because every day was different. You had your challenges of course ... but I also had the fun stuff," she said.

Chiasson retired at the end of December after nearly 35 years of teaching people to swim, teaching lifesaving skills and saving a few lives herself.

She recalled one water-loving special needs teenager who was repeatedly jumping from the diving board, until one time he jumped in the pool, sank to the bottom and stood there.

She saw him standing there underwater and immediately jumped in after him.

"I literally had to go down and grab him by the arm and pull him over to the ladder," Chiasson said.

She recalled another time, working with a second lifeguard to save two panicked swimmers.

And then there was that time when a one-year-old ran along the pool deck and fell in the deep end.

Chiasson recalled trying to grab hold of the toddler, but he slipped from her fingers. She said parents often covered their children with lotion to protect their sensitive skin from the chlorine, and the boy she was trying to save was very slippery.

"I was trying to bring this baby up to the surface, and I couldn't grab him from the diaper because it would have come off," she said.

Nevertheless, she managed to get the child safely to the surface.

She said there has never been a drowning at the Port Colborne pool. There's a lot of training involved in being a lifeguard. Chiasson said that training made a huge difference when dealing with life-and-



MARYANNE FIRTH Staff Photo
Longtime Port Colborne aquatics supervisor Mary Chiasson is honoured by the city for her 34 years of service at Centennial Pool. Chiasson is presented with a framed photo and plaque by Mayor Vance Badaway.

death situations.

"When you get into a real environment, you're glad you have the ability and the knowledge of how to take care of yourself as well as them," she said.

Nor long after starting her job at the pool, Chiasson started learning everything she could about first aid and CPR. "I was just getting more and more training. I got all my certifications and training status, and then I trained everybody down here."

When she finished teaching lifesaving skills at the pool, Chiasson spent her evenings and weekends volunteering with the Red Cross, teaching first aid and CPR.

Chiasson also worked with the Red Cross emergency services, helping people in Niagara overcome trauma. Her volunteer work earned her a medal in the 1990s. Despite her retirement, Chiasson is continuing to work with Red Cross.

Through it all, Chiasson has developed many fond memories.

She once helped a boy overcome his fear of water acquired after nearly drowning when he was five years old. "He was found in a backyard pool. His mother actually saw him. All his toys were in the water and he was in the middle," she said.

After the boy recovered from his close call, he was terrified of water. His parents brought him to Centennial Pool, hoping aquatics staff at the pool would be able to help.

"I got to work with him and brought him back to a healthy respect of the water," Chiasson recalled. "It was just something I was able to do to help him."

"He drowned, they had to revive him, and I actually brought him back."

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■ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: It's no mid-pen corridor

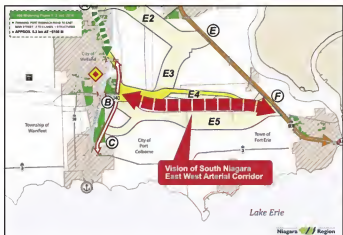


Photo courtesy of Niagara Region

A clip from a Niagara Region chart depicting the east-west arterial road.

South Niagara highway prospect is great news for local industry

ALLAN BENNER
InPortNews Staff

WELLAND — Economic development officer Dan Degazio used to tell people the city was “two turns from Toronto” while promoting the city to investors.

Someday soon, he may be able to tell people Welland is only one turn away from the big city. “It’s great news,” Degazio said. “We’ve been waiting for that for quite a while.”

He was reacting to news that a provincial government study group has embraced a highway connecting Hwy. 140 at the Welland-Port Colborne border to the QEW in Fort Erie. If that highway becomes a reality, drivers will be able to follow the new highway east, and make a single left turn at the QEW to get to Toronto.

The new highway is a project Port Colborne Mayor Vance Isidore said he’s been involved in since 2001, when working on a regional transportation strategy for Niagara.

“It really enhances a more robust economic culture, not only in the western of Niagara but in the entire south western gateway region,” he added.

He said the next step is to bring partners together from throughout Niagara and meet with provincial government officials “and really ensure that they have (the project) within their next five-year capital plan.”

The region, he says, has already budgeted \$10 million to help pay for the highway.

Degazio said it would also be nice to get approval for a GTA-Niagara corridor — a long talked about highway that would connect Hwy. 403 to south Niagara — “but this to me is as important, if not more important.”

“Our industries should be excited about

this,” he said.

Although no dates have been identified regarding when that highway could be a reality, Welland Development Commission chairman David McLeod said the endorsement itself is enough to help the city’s economic development efforts.

McLeod, a Ward 2 city councillor, said companies that are looking for communities in which to locate plants “are taking a long-term view.” And regardless of the timeline for building the highway, McLeod said it is still “a selling point that the province has come out and made this statement.”

He said the highway endorsement ties in with the region’s Gateway Economic Zone and Centre Community Improvement Plan — an initiative that will provide some tax incentives to industry.

“It’s just another piece that helps make a stronger case to locate in Welland,” McLeod said.

The Rose City has two industrial parks along Hwy. 140, and additional property zoned industrial near the intersection of Hwy. 406 Woodlawn Rd. That new highway would make those properties “much more attractive propositions for companies looking to locate a manufacturing firm, and are targeting the eastern seaboard of the United States,” said Welland Mayor Barry Sharpe.

“I read the news and I thought, ‘Hallelujah!’” said Welland-Pelham Chamber of Commerce executive director Dolores Fabiano. “It’s about time. It’s great news for us.”

She said new highway approval is “long overdue.”

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ACTIVE LIVING: Reach Out Centre group celebrates milestone

We Walked to New York City

VICTORIA GRAY
inPortNEWS Staff

PORT COLBORNE — Most people don't walk to the corner store let alone to New York City.

That's the distance the walking group at Port Carles Reach Out Centre has managed to log since October.

On Thursdays members celebrated the completion of the 811,679th step, which is about the distance from Port Colborne to the Big Apple.

Bell Burger joined the group in July to lose weight and stay active — and lost about 4.5 kilograms in the process.

"It feels really good to have accomplished the goal," Burger said. "It sure took awhile."

To reward themselves, Burger, her daughter Tina and three other members gathered at the centre for cheese cake, bagels and cream cheese and coffee.

The eight-member group

“It's designed for everyone from people who can't stand up to those who are more active.”

Laura Ciccone, Reach Out Centre healthy living co-ordinator

started the virtual 586-km walk in October, trekking around the area of Port Carles Reach Out Centre on Nickel St. They also ventured over the nearby bridge and walked around downtown.

Reach Out Centre healthy living co-ordinator Laura Ciccone said in the summer months the group walked to the community garden on Davis St. and picked fresh produce for the food bank.

"In the summer it was easier to get people moti-

vated to walk, but when it got colder I wanted to do something new and fun," she said. "I figured New York was a fun place and people who haven't been there want to go and those who have want to go back."

In two weeks Ciccone hopes to start an indoor exercise program that will meet Mondays and Thursdays for people of all ages and abilities.

"It's designed for everyone from people who can't stand up to those who are more active," she said.

The program will focus on strength training and graduate to cardio without using expensive equipment.

For more information call Ciccone at 905-854-1914 ext. 21.

"A healthy lifestyle is important, and for a lot of people that's a challenge."

"I just want to show people exercise can be fun and social."



VICTORIA GRAY Staff Photo

Port Carles Reach Out Centre Walking Group celebrated walking the distance from Port Colborne to New York City with a New York-themed party. From left: Community developer Sandra Pedersen, healthy living co-ordinator Laura Ciccone and group members Bell Burger, Tina Burger and Barb Dusome.

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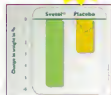
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